

Statement of Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA)
Press Conference on the Energy Bill
Wednesday, February 9, 2005

I am pleased to join with other Democratic Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee here this morning to discuss the Republican energy bill.

As you all know, Johnny Carson passed away a few weeks ago, and if you're like me, you remember with fondness the many nights when Johnny would do his Carnac routine.

So today, in honor of Johnny's passing, let me begin with the following answer: "85 percent higher."

And Heeeeeeeere's the question!: According to the Energy Department's Energy Information Administration, how will oil imports change in the next two decades if we pass the Republican energy bill?

That's right – our oil import dependence will soar by 85 percent if we adopt the Republican Energy Policy.

Although the President and Republican leaders have been giving speeches calling on Congress to pass their energy bill so that we can reduce our dependence on imported oil, it turns out to be an Oil Import Placebo – a temporary psychological diversion that actually does practically nothing to address our fundamental over-reliance on oil imports from unstable regions of the world.. There is nothing to require cars and SUVs to be more fuel efficient, despite that fact that two-thirds of the oil we consume goes into gasoline tanks.

That is the most serious problem with this bill. But there are many others.

On nuclear security, the bill before us fails to protect American from the threat of a terrorist attack.. The H.R. 6 conference report eliminated three bipartisan nuclear security provisions that were passed twice by the House, but which are opposed by the nuclear utilities industry. The stricken provisions would have:

- Required a formal NRC nuclear security and anti-terrorism rulemaking.
- Required the NRC to consult with the Secretary of Homeland Security regarding the adequacy of emergency evacuation plans for communities surrounding a nuclear power plant, or to require consultation prior to a re-licensing of an existing nuclear power plant.
- Required the NRC to adopt new security rules for domestic transfers of nuclear materials to protect them from theft or sabotage.

On nuclear proliferation – which the President says is the most important issue facing America -- this bill would revive nuclear reprocessing at a time when our nation's

security concerns are heightened by North Korea and Iran's moves to develop nuclear weapons, and the looming threat that other nations may follow. At this sensitive time, this bill would reverse nearly three decades of U.S. nuclear non-proliferation policies. Since the Ford Administration, the U.S. has maintained a strict policy against reprocessing waste from commercial nuclear reactors and against using plutonium to generate energy for commercial use. The Republican energy bill would reverse this long-standing policy thereby greatly increasing global proliferation and security risks.

Finally, since the time the Republican energy bill was passed, we have seen a proliferation of proposals to construct new liquefied natural gas, or LNG, terminals around the country. More than 30 such proposals are currently pending before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission or the Coast Guard. As the Representative of Everett, Massachusetts, the home of the only urban LNG importation terminal in the country, I am concerned that we are not doing enough to ensure that new LNG terminals are not sited in urban areas like Everett, and that my 1979 law directing regulators to encourage remote siting is not being followed. The Sandia Laboratory just submitted a study of the terrorist threat to LNG tankers in December, Congressman Dingell and I just joined with Chairman Barton and Chairman Cox to ask the GAO to initiate a further investigation into federal efforts to secure LNG tankers, oil tankers, and other similar vessels and energy infrastructure from terrorist threats.

We need to look at all of these issues in any energy bill, and I see no indication that this will happen right now. We don't know if we are going to even have a markup of this bill in the Subcommittee or the full Committee, where Democrats might have a chance to offer amendments to improve the bill.